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Camp Horizons

Camp Horizons

An Alumnus entrepreneurial adventure

William John Hall (John) traveled in Cast D, '78-79 after being out of high school for one year. His Up With People year was full of new people and lots of firsts, but perhaps most importantly, the year provided a chance for John's instinct for experiential learning to take root and set the path for his future entrepreneurial adventures.

In 1983, four years after **Up With People** (Cast D 1978-79), John founded a residential summer camp at the age of 23. **Camp Horizons**, an American Camp Association (ACA) Accredited camp, is now in its 28th year and has hosted campers from more than 50 countries – including children – and has participated in camper exchange programs with camps from Russia, Venezuela, South Korea and Brazil. Camp Horizons philosophy reflects much of Up With People's message of creating community through learning about, and seeking to better understand, an another.

"We believe in the importance of giving children back their childhood! Camp Horizons is dedicated to providing children with a place they can call their own in our constantly changing world; where they become a part of a supportive, encouraging community; and where they understand their own rights and responsibilities but also appreciate and respect the rights of others. Camp Horizons is a diverse community of campers members, from many different cultures and backgrounds, working, playing and learning together. We encourage each other to try new things, favorite activities, grow in confidence and a sense of accomplishment, and build strong friendships that last a lifetime.

We take pride in our influence and ability to create lifelong memories. Our intent is to spark an energy capable of impacting people around the world through fun, friendship and respect for others and ourselves. We may or may not change the world, but we will change our corner in it. We are one!

John has many fond memories of international campers and their families. He enjoys seeing campers return for consecutive years, often bring friends from home. But by far, the most rewarding part of the international aspect of Camp for John is that many former members have used Camp Horizons experience as a foundation to create experiential outdoor programs themselves.

After starting Camp Horizons it was soon clear that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to pay the bills. Right away John began to generate business from universities, schools and churches, for what is now called the Outdoor Learning Center (OLC). John also created Horizons Consulting Group (HCG) in 1985 when he was asked if he offered programs for businesses. This grew rapidly through the '80s and into the '90s as the companies John provided training for was the largest contractor of job corps; this began work that would eventually become Hori Youth Services (HYS). John developed trainings for students and staff and ultimately received the opportunity to operate a job corps center.

Horizons Youth Services provides an opportunity for young people to grow and build brighter futures for themselves and their communities; focusing on the development of skills that unleash the potential in them to become productive citizens. Through this part of his company, John developed and operated many innovative youth programs, including leadership development and leadership training programs. Twice a year Horizons conducts Leadership Conferences for student representatives from regional Job Corps Centers. Horizons also runs five Job Corps centers for the U.S. Department of Labor.

This year, John was named to chair the National Job Corps Association's "Green Workgroup." The goal of the group is to help prepare the U.S. for a "green" economy that focuses on alternative energy sources, new technology and conservation efforts to save energy, reduce dependence on foreign oil and protect the environment. John's goal is to identify ways to help young people of Job Corps access these opportunities for growth to be able to better succeed in the 21st century.

John spearheaded two major projects this summer that combined his interest in providing learning opportunities for young people and his passion for service. One was an historical restoration project and the second a 4-week Habitat for Humanity "Blitz."

John and Al Jenkins, **President of the Longs Chapel Preservation Society**, collaborated to give student volunteers from the Horizons Job Corps Centers in KY, TX, and CA the opportunity to earn job skill training while participating in a valuable service-learning experience and being able to take part in understanding history from a hands-on perspective. The students participated in the restoration of Longs Chapel (circa 1869), one of the historic landmarks that still remains in what was a former community in Rockingham County, VA, formed by freed slaves in the 1800's. This was the 3rd year in a row, **Horizons Job Corp Students, Habitat for Humanity** contractors and other partners (over 200 volunteers) joined together to help build three houses for families in need in Lafayette, Louisiana.

In 2009, John formed the **Horizons Learning Foundation (HLF)** – a non-profit organization established exclusively for charitable, scientific and educational purposes. HLF's first project was to purchase the **Keezetown Community Cannery**. The Cannery is the only true can-yo non-profit cannery remaining in Virginia and one of the oldest in the United States. Due to budget cutbacks, the County was going to have the Cannery down. John and the Horizons Learning Foundation are committed to preserving this important piece of history and intend to take the Cannery down and the historic school building on the same property, for educational and experiential programs. Such programs expose students to cultural historical traditions from various regions of the country and around the world – a local version of the kind of experience John benefitted from his time in Up With People.

For John, the year he spent with Up With People was filled with many exciting adventures and learning experiences. He visited 15 states and countries and lived with over 80 host families. Thirty-two years later, John is creating exciting adventures and learning experiences for other internationally and locally. The commonality across all of his businesses is reflected in the mission statement of Endless Horizons: "we strive to believe in personal growth and making a positive impact on people's lives."

As a result of John's business endeavors and achievements, he was recently recognized as the **2009 Entrepreneur of the Year** by the local Chamber of Commerce. At the award banquet, John noted that "the commonality of everything is working with people. It isn't widgets or any [is] working with people." Or as the Caldwell's might say, "If more people were for people, all people everywhere, there'd be a lot less people worry about and a lot more people who care!"

By: Lindsey Johnson

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(See 7 Photos Below)

John Hall (left), founder of Camp Horizons with former camp logo and new accreditation (1983)

Closing Circle at Camp Horizons singing the Camp Song "We are Many We are One" (Summer 2009)

John Hall (1st row, far right) and Al Jenkins (standing, 3rd from left) with HYS Job Corp Students at the Longs Chapel Restoration site (August 2009)

Keezletown Community Cannery Logo (left) and photo of the Cannery in action (Summer 2009; John Hall not pictured)

Habitat for Humanity "Blitz." 200+ volunteers, including Hall's Horizons Youth Services Job Corp Students (Fall, 2009; John Hall n pictured)

John Hall with son, Jake, at the Award Banquet (January 2010)

John Hall (left) receiving the 2009 Entrepreneur of the Year Award (January 2010)

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